

**Governor's Rural Affairs Council
Meeting Minutes – December 6, 2017**

1. **The meeting was called to order by Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti at 11:02 am.** Lt. Governor announced that if members of the public are in attendance, and are interested in providing remarks to the council, they should please sign in with Susan Bence in Springfield and Brian Costin in Chicago.

Roll Call

Member Agencies Present:

Illinois Department of Agriculture, Don Moffitt
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Erika Kennett (phone)
Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Wendy Bell (phone)
Illinois Department of Employment Security, Shelly Tweedy and Jeff Fulgenzi
Illinois Department of Human Services, John Marchioro (phone)
Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Valerie Keener
Illinois Department of Public Health, Heidi Clark
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Amy Walkenbach
Illinois State Board of Education, Colin Hitt
Illinois Community College Board, LaVonne Nelson
Southern Illinois University, Nina Antoniotti
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, Christopher Merrett
Illinois Finance Authority, Patrick Evans
Illinois Farm Bureau, Brenda Matherly

Not Present: Illinois Department of Aging, Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois Housing Development Authority, Rural Partners, University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service

Citizen Members Present:

Luke Allen (phone)
Doug Hanks
Heather Hampton Knodle
Sonja Reece

Nonvoting Members Present:

Dwight Reynolds, USDA
Norman Walzer, NIU (phone)

Lt. Governor's Office Present:

Evelyn Sanguinetti
Susan Wynn Bence
Brian Costin
Derek Cantu

Quorum determined.

2. Opening Remarks

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti welcomed everyone to the Governor's Rural Affairs Council. She expressed her regrets for not being present in Springfield, but was happy to be able to participate through technology.

She explained in the last three years, several things have been accomplished to spur rural development, including getting the Angel Investment Tax Credit initiated. She mentioned that the Limited Liability Company (LLC) fee issue legislation is making its way to the Governor's desk.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti announced that the Governor recently signed an Emergency Harvest Declaration, which will help rural farmers with this year's harvest. She thanked members of GRAC for discussing issues important to rural Illinois and keeping these issues in the forefront. These issues include the opioid/heroin epidemic; rural education issues; school funding among others topics.

She explained that the Rural Education Meeting discussed the availability of college classes/credits in rural schools. A pilot program to allow students to take classes virtually has been established. She stated she was proud to say that an equitable funding formula was been discussed by the Education Funding Commission that would treat all students fairly. The Lt. Governor stated going forward there is still lots of work to do which is why this council is so important. She again thanked everyone for their work this last year.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from July 19, 2017.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti asked if there were any corrections to the minutes. Heidi Clark asked for clarification that the Department of Health state loan program is funded. Sonja Reece made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Doug Hanks. Motion passed. Minutes were approved.

4. Approval of Working Group Meeting Minutes

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti asked if there were any corrections to the working group minutes. Sonja Reece made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Doug Hanks. Motion passed. Minutes were approved.

5. Working Group Summaries

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti explained that the topic of "Rural Affairs" provides an endless opportunity to dive deeper into issues affecting rural communities. There are four main focus areas and created working groups to develop strategies and goals. The working groups include:

- Health – Co-Chaired by Sonja Reece and Larry Richards
- Workforce Development – Co-Chaired by Norm Walzer and Doug Hanks
- Economic Development – Co-Chaired by Todd Kaeb and Heather Hampton Knodle
- Education – Co-Chaired by Lucas Allen and Chris Merrett

The Lt. Governor stated that only one group has met since our last meeting which was Education. She asked if either Lucas Allen or Chris Merrett would provide a short report.

Lucas Allen reported that the group is focusing on three issues:

1. Barriers to student teaching – working on a way to reduce the financial burden placed on college students regarding the expense of background checks.
2. Continue to explore access to AP and dual credit courses.
3. School infrastructure to address hunger issues as rural hunger relates to education.

The Lt. Governor thanked the working group. She stated she also has been working with groups to end child hunger including the USDA and the Dairy Commission. She mentioned that she is working on getting “Breakfast after the Bell” program implemented.

Chris Merrett noted that the state has announced it is currently tracking food deserts. He suggested perhaps we could seek input from the committee that is seeking this information. The Lt. Governor agreed this was a great idea.

6. Presentation – Dwight Reynolds, USDA

The Lt. Governor explained that in the annual GRAC report, the Economic Development Working Group recommended the increased promotion of the Rural Reverse Funding Fairs (RRFF). These fairs represent a collaboration between the USDA, the IIRA, and other state agencies. She then asked Dwight Reynolds, USDA, to provide more information regarding the RRFF program.

Dwight explained that the fairs are similar to the television show “Shark Tank” for communities. These were started in 2015 and offered in seven different communities. He noted that most rural communities only have part-time employees or elected officials who do not have the time to contact several agencies to gain information about project funding and technical assistance. So, instead of asking busy local government officials to travel to Springfield, these RRFF bring state and federal agency representatives out into rural communities. This allows local community stakeholders such as economic developers, elected officials, and business owners to meet with several funding agencies at once. This program was originally started by DCEO on a smaller scale.

Dwight further explained that the group contacts local ED groups to see if funding is needed in their area. If so, a meeting is set up which allows 9-10 businesses/entrepreneurs to present ideas to funding agencies. Applications are taken to decide who will actually be presenting. These applications are scored on categories such as: need, ED development, job creation potential, etc. Presenters are given 10-15 minutes to present their ideas/business to the group of funders. This allows agencies to explain if they have programs that might help with funding. Note: these are only informational meetings; no funding decisions are made at this time.

Dwight mentioned that in 2018 there will be at least one RRFF per quarter. These have not been scheduled as of this meeting. He announced that interested people should contact either himself or Robin Hanna, IIRA, if they know of a community interested in hosting a meeting. Dwight explained that the IIRA grad students are helping monitor the outcomes of the meeting and provide assistance in connecting the community or business applications for funding and technical assistance to the specific funder(s).

The Lt. Governor thanked Dwight and asked if there were any questions.

1. Heather Hampton Knodle stated that when meetings were hosted in Peoria there was one business which presented in round 1 and then again in round 2.

Dwight explained that this has only happened a couple of times. Most of the time there are new businesses and communities at each RRFF meeting.

2. Heather wanted to know if there could be a scenario for a business and communities to meet with funders on the same day.

Dwight explained yes, that it is a regional approach. That is what is in fact happening.

3. Lucas Allen inquired as to the barriers that people have in finding funding. Is there not enough funding or are there other reasons?

Dwight stated normally it's an issue of local community stakeholders not knowing what is available. Large communities often have a grant writer on staff, whereas, small communities have to rely on local elected officials or part-time employees to help. Dwight then explained it's often a lack of funding in the state agency and the amount of paperwork needed to provide funding.

Since several agency jobs are part-time positions, they do not have the time that a full-time staff person would have. In addition, several agencies have had their staffs reduced due to budget cuts. This can also hinder the ability of agencies to be as responsive as they would like. So, the RRFF addresses these issues by allowing a large group of several businesses or communities to meet with a funder at once which overall saves time for the funding agency.

4. Sonja Reece stated that McLean County uses a technique or approach to grant writing called "One Voice." She stated this means applying as a multi-community region rather than individual projects.

5. Brian Costin requested information on the cost of this program for business/entrepreneurs.

Dwight explained it is a free program to local economic developers. He explained that sometimes a local organization includes lunch and covers this cost.

6. LaVonne Nelson asked if the group has considered inviting local private or community foundations, which might also be willing to fund certain projects.

Dwight explained that yes on some larger projects foundations have been invited to participate.

The Lt. Governor thanked Dwight for his presentation.

7. Panel Discussion – Opioid Action Plan and Task Force Update

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti stated we are currently battling the deadliest drug epidemic Illinois has ever seen. Opioid overdoses have killed almost 11,000 people in Illinois since 2008. Overdoses are increasing rapidly, with almost 1,900 residents dying from opioid-related overdoses in 2016. Note: this is twice the number of people killed in car accidents. She also mentioned that increasing overdoses are happening because of the synthetic drugs fentanyl and carfentanyl. If Illinois does nothing, overdose deaths are projected to increase to 2,700 per year by 2020. Therefore, Illinois must take action. She explained that Governor Rauner signed an Executive Order creating the Opioid Overdose Prevention and Intervention Task Force. The Lt. Governor and Dr. Nirav Shah, Director of the IL Dept. of Public Health are the co-chairs of the task force.

The task force has drafted an action plan, kicked off a listening tour to increase knowledge of how this epidemic is impacting different regions in the state, and has launched a 24 hour helpline. The goal is to use the information gained from these visits to implement the action plan and reduce the number of overdose deaths by one third in three years.

She introduced Don Kauerauf, Assistant Director, Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Sam Gillespie, Substance Abuse Services Administrator, Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Leo Schmitz, Director, Illinois State Police, and Dr. Maria Bruni, Assistant Secretary of Programs for the Illinois Department of Human Services, who provided more details about the opioid problem.

Don Kauerauf explained that the opioid epidemic is a national crisis. Initiatives to combat this are:

- a. Standing order on Narcan, a pharmaceutical that can reverse an opioid overdose.
- b. 24 hour lifeline / telephone hotline to help victims and their families.
- c. Prescription guidelines to better control the supply of opioids in circulation.

He reported that he found the listening tours very helpful. These public events allow health care professionals to hear the perspectives of others not in the medical field. He stated the findings thus far include:

- a. Chronic disease – And it does not just affect addicts. It is an urban, rural, any race crisis which is impacting all communities.
- b. He heard powerful messages from those in recovery.
- c. People are afraid of being branded in their community. People are afraid to request help.
- d. It is a real struggle to recover. You have to want to recover. The state needs to provide tools and strategies for health so people being affected will make the decision to choose help.
- e. Going forward – No Blame.

Mr. Kauerauf explained that in order to see progress we must provide support for people through counseling, treatment, and full scale services. We must use a combination of prevention and treatment recovery and response. He cautioned that this is a long term project and those addicted will need years of treatment. Providing Narcan to first responders is a start.

Sam Gillespie stated that DCFS investigates child abuse and neglect; however, now we need to provide services related to helping these children. Substance abuse services impact a child's welfare. He noted that 74% of cases have a parent or parents who have a substance abuse problem.

For the sake of comparison, he noted that data for 1995 showed a 50% problem for cocaine or crack. Similar data for 2015 showed a 20% problem for heroin and 10% problem for prescription drugs. He stated that the risk of overdose deaths is a new crisis. He stated that his agency is encouraging:

- a. Telemedicine and telehealth a priority to improve health care access in rural areas.
- b. Longer treatment periods for addicts – 28 days is not sufficient for heroin abuse.
- c. Increased medical treatment programs.
- d. Access to more information regarding prescription monitoring.
- e. Use of Narcan. Most law enforcement officers and first responders must have it available.
- f. Use personal stories to make parents aware that their kids could be involved.

Director of Illinois State Police, Leo Schmitz explained that Narcan is available in every police car on the road. This drug has saved several lives in 2017. He explained that it is preferred to divert the person into a drug treatment program rather than arrest them. He noted that knowing where the problems are and where overdoses are occurring are particular important. Police can then alert the hospitals that overdoses are occurring so they are adequately prepared.

Director Schmitz explained that there is a task force focused on prevention. In January, all police stations will have a receptacle for pill collection. Many patients are prescribed more pills than they use. Sometimes, these unused narcotics will fall into the wrong hands (e.g. children or thieves). Providing this kind of drop off point will give people, whether they have the drugs legally or not, a place to turn in drugs with no fear of arrest.

Dr. Maria Bruni explained her group is working to implement the action plan. One of the initiatives is to launch the helpline. In addition, the task force is working on:

- a. Access to care – There are several service “deserts” in rural counties. Need ability to access a doctor or outpatient programs. Telemedicine might help mitigate this problem.
- b. Satellite locations – provide access to medication or counseling beyond the clinic.
- c. Helpline – Call takers are grant funded. Each person answering the telephone is trained in motivational intervention. This is set up to also help family members. The goal is to make sure correct referrals are made so that people are directed to the correct place for assistance.
- d. Increase access to Narcan to reverse drug overdoses.

The Lt. Governor thanked each speaker. She asked GRAC members to raise their hand if they had received training in Narcan. She thinks it would be a great idea to train all GRAC members on how to administer Narcan.

The Lt. Governor then asked if there were any questions.

1. Sonja Reece asked is the helpline was connected to 211 which is a crisis line.

Dr. Bruni explained that she was in the process of setting up meetings with 211 and other similar crisis lines.

Nina Antoniotti mentioned that regulatory barriers to telehealth and telepharmacy need to be resolved. She noted that there are issues with Medicaid and private insurers covering telehealth care. Nina explained that the bill to change these payment issues needs to be reintroduced.

2. LaVonne Nelson asked how heroin and opioids connect.

Dr. Bruni explained that new users (under 25 years of age) to heroin normally start on prescription opioids due to an injury. She explained that it is a very short path to heroin from prescription drugs since heroin is often easier to obtain. The risk is that the synthetic drugs are much more dangerous. This is a reason there must be prescription limits.

3. Any Walkenbach asked what the repercussions are if Narcan is administered inappropriately.

Leo Schmitz answered that this is not a problem and you can't give too much.

Dr. Bruni explained they are currently using the program "Hubs-n-Spokes" to highlight areas of overdoses.

4. Don Moffitt inquired if there are geographical areas in the state where first responders do not have access or a sufficient supply of Narcan?

Don Kauerauf explained that yes there are some areas where EMS agencies do not have access. However, not to law enforcement. The IDPH has provided a grant to 18 counties to provide funding for law enforcement to have Narcan available.

Leo Schmitz explained some areas cannot afford Narcan so his department is working on sharing ways to get it.

5. Sonja Reece asked if Narcan is available in school systems and does it expire?

Dr. Bruni explained that yes, schools districts do have access. She stated that the Narcan has a shelf line of 18 months.

6. Heather Hampton Knodle asked if there are keys to prevention. Are there fact sheets with signs/symptoms? If local law enforcement knows who the dealer is, why can't they arrest him?

Leo Schmitz said unfortunately law enforcement has to make a case before moving forward on arresting the dealer. If there are 3 overdoses with one hour, the overdose team goes out and tries to shutdown sales. He explained also that it is not easy to charge a drug a dealer with drug induced homicide.

The Lt. Governor says they are working on a fact sheet to be distributed.

Dr. Bruni says they are also working on materials to provide education in the classroom and home for prevention. There are other programs that deliver prevention activities to schools and to promote positive youth development.

Nina Antoniotti suggested that perhaps Illinois needs to strengthen the laws so that dealers can be arrested similar to other states.

The Lt. Governor again thanked the presenters.

8. New Business

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti introduced and thanked Dave Newcomb, Ag Rescue Program Manager. His team went the “extra” mile to provide a demonstration of the rescue tubes for grain bins at the Illinois State Fair. She also announced that Todd Kaeb and his business, KSI Conveyors, received the honor of being named “Best of Farm Progress Show 2017.”

Don Moffitt introduced Laura Sinclair, Legislative Liaison, Illinois Department of Agriculture. Laura stated her organization was honored to host today’s meeting.

Chris Merrett announced the 29th Annual Rural Community and Economic Development Conference will be held on March 7-8, 2018, in Springfield, at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel. The GRAC meeting will be held after the conference on Thursday, March 8, beginning at 1 pm. He thanked Norm Walzer and Sandy Wittig for their behind the scenes logistics for the conference.

Susan Wynn Bence announced/introduced Jay McCracken, Superintendent at Hall High School, LaSalle County would be joining the Education Working Group.

She announced the following dates for the 2018 GRAC meetings:

- a. 3/8/18 – IIRA Annual Conference, Abraham Lincoln Hotel and Conference Center, Springfield, IL - 1:00 pm
- b. 5/2/18 – TBA
- c. 7/18/18 – TBA
- d. 12/5/18 – TBA

Calendar items:

- a. IIRA Annual Conference, Springfield – March 7-8, 2018
- b. Illinois State Fair – August 9-19, 2018
- c. DuQuoin State Fair – August 24 – September 3, 2018
- d. Farm Progress Show – August 28-30, 2018

9. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

10. Adjournment

The Lt. Governor thanked everyone for their time and dedication.

Sonja Reece made a motion to adjourn. Nina Antoniotti seconded the motion. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 1:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Chris Merrett
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs
Western Illinois University